



Effective Internet Search Techniques - Google "Cheat Sheet"

(excerpted from the "2012 Attorney's Information Forensics Handbook")

Checking an Email Address:

Effective email address searches can turn up information regarding:

- Newsgroup Postings
- Affiliations
- Personal Information

Example 1: If the subject has their own domain ("**@companyname.com**" instead of a generic account like "**@gmail.com**") then you may find information regarding their company - as well as other researchable email addresses by inserting the following into the Google search - make sure to include the quotes:

"@companyname.com"

Example 2: If the email address is generic (AOL, Yahoo, Gmail, etc.) then you will use the same technique above, but using the entire address:

"name@companyname.com"

Refining Searches:

Some terms are so generic as to return too much "noise" when doing a search. To combat this, use the following search techniques:

To search a specific phrase use quotes around the phrase:

Example: To search for the phrase "Copyright CompanyName" you would use the following:

"Copyright CompanyName"

To make a term mandatory in the search results use the "+" in front of the term (no quotes). To exclude a term, use the "-" (no quotes), and to use synonyms use the "~" sign.

Example 1: To search for CompanyName and to mandate all results have the term "John Doe" in them you would use:

+CompanyName +"John Doe"

Example 2: To search for CompanyName and to exclude all results that have the term "John Doe" you would use:

+CompanyName -"John Doe"

Example 3: To search for CompanyName and to include results that are synonyms of the term "contract" you would use:

+CompanyName ~"Contract"

Special Searches

Site Searches:

To search content on a specific site use the keyword "site:" (no quotes).

Example: To search CompanyName.com for the term "Property" you would use the following:

site:CompanyName.com "property"

Cached Searches:

Google may temporarily hold "caches" of a site. What this means is that in some cases a snapshot of a page as it appeared on a particular date is available. This can be useful to look for information that has been recently removed or changed.

Example 1: To find the latest Google cached version of CompanyName.com:

cache:CompanyName.com

Example 2: To find the latest Google cached version of the contact page on CompanyName.com:

cache:CompanyName.com/contact.html

Linked Sites:

This will show other sites that link to a particular site on the web. This can help identify other relationships, affiliations, etc.

Example: To search for sites that link to CompanyName.com you would use:

link:CompanyName.com

Filetype searches:

You can look for particular file types (xls, doc, pdf, etc.) by using the keyword "filetype:". This can be useful particularly when combined with a company or site reference. Make sure to read the "Caveats" section below.

Example 1: To find spreadsheets that are associated with CompanyName, or have CompanyName in them:

+CompanyName filetype:xls

Example 2: To find spreadsheets indexed specifically on site CompanyName.com:

site:CompanyName.com filetype:xls

Caveats

Not all information is indexed by Google. There are ways to instruct Google not to search/index certain items or sections of a site. In other words - just because you don't find it doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

This applies particularly to the filetype keywords - not everyone will make the mistake of having documents indexed by Google accidentally - although you would be surprised at the number that have!

SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

This category of sites involves information that has been entered by the user of the site themselves. You can still pick up valuable information left by the user, as well as information regarding people “in their networks”. Look for other sites used, other usernames and identities on other resources to search. As of this writing all of the sites listed in this category are indexed by Google and can be singled out by using “site:”, “inurl:” and “intitle:” modifiers to the search. Normal search caveats apply.

Sites include:

LinkedIn.com

Twitter.com - Note: As of this revision, if a user deletes a message (called a “tweet”) from their timeline it is **NOT** deleted from the actual Twitter search feature.

Myspace.com

Facebook.com

GOOGLE’S IMAGE SEARCH INDEX:

images.google.com - Since the last “Vidoc Razor Google Cheatsheet” update, Google has added the ability to search images. This allows you to upload an image (photo of a person, place, logo, etc.) and Google will search its databases for images that are the same (Even if resized, etc), or images that are visually similar based on Google’s algorithm.

While the search results can vary wildly, we have been successful at using this to identify social networking accounts that use the same profile photo, “pirated” copies of products, and other unique searches.

To use: Once on the Google Image Search site (linked above), click on the camera icon located in the search bar. You can either enter a URL that is a direct link to a photo or graphical image, or upload one from your desktop. Click on the search icon and Google will display your results. You will note different categories: Exact results for the image, and visually similar results.

On the results page, you can add keywords, etc. to try to refine what the search index brings back to you.